

GOOD FRIDAY COMMENTARY

“You shall have no other gods.” But if He really loves me, He won’t want me to pick between Him and the other things I love. God will understand.

“You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.” But He knows that I can’t help it when I get angry, that I can only take so much. God will understand.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” I love the Bible and all. I mean, I have my Bible sitting on the coffee table, don’t I? But I have other responsibilities as well. Sometimes one hour out of 168 in a week is just a little too much to ask. And, besides, its not like the sermon is as exciting as that rerun of Seinfeld I watched for the twenty-seventh time last week. God will understand.

“Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” But God can’t really expect me to honor them when I don’t like what they say and do, and, besides, if God wanted us to respect the government, our parents, and our pastors so much, why would He send us the B-team. God will understand.

“You shall not murder.” That’s an easy one, although He can’t be serious about the whole love your enemies thing. It sounds great and all, but if our enemies wanted us to love them they wouldn’t be such jerks. God will understand.

“You shall not commit adultery.” But I’m not made of stone. I have urges, urges He gave me. A little window-shopping never hurt anyone. And He wouldn’t want me gambling on something like marriage. Best take a test drive around the block before you buy the car. God will understand.

“You shall not steal.” But finders keepers, losers weepers, and its not stealing if it is from the government or a big corporation, and if the cashier gives me too much and I know it its not my fault she can’t count. God will understand.

“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.” Unless, that is, it’s a celebrity, or someone you don’t like, or it’s juicy enough gossip that you really think the world should know. God will understand.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” But its not like thoughts are real sins. You can’t stop the birds from flying in your hair. God will understand.

No, God will not understand. God does not understand. God cannot understand, or He would not be God. No, this is what God does to sin. He punishes it, puts it to death, casts into the bellies of hell, that is, He forsakes it. And squirm all you want, your sin did this, put him there...on that cross...with that crown...with bloodied back and tortured lungs, crying out to a God who had forsaken Him, mocked by very recipients of His dying love. Your sins! My sins! Our sins did that!

But I thought God would understand, that it wasn't a big deal. Nope, the only one who didn't understand was you, and I can't think of a bigger deal than God nailed to a cross, to your cross, to our cross.

The prophet Zechariah, the same prophet who foretold Palm Sunday, saw Good Friday long before it took place. He prophesied, "***On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness***" Today is that day.

The hymn writer sings:

There is a fountain filled with blood—
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.
When this poor lisp'ing, stamm'ring tongue
Lies silent in the grave,
Then in a nobler, sweeter song
I'll sing your pow'r to save. (TLH 157)

God understood one thing. God understood, not your sin, but what that sin would do to you. He knew where it would take you: into the grave and down to the depths of hell. And He couldn't let that happen, would not let that happen. Just as He had opened the firmaments in the Flood in a stream of judgment at Noah's time, so now He opened His only-begotten's side in a stream of mercy, as water and Blood flowed forth and still do, from the font and the chalice, onto your heads and into your mouths. He did all this to set you free, not to sin, but from sin, not to bend His law, but to delight in it.

Understand that. Understand how much He loves you, loves you all the way to this day, loves you all the way to this cross, to this death, to this hell, not because He earned it, but because you did. Understand that.

Die with Him today. Die to sin and all those excuses. Die to yourself and all your selfish desires. Fall asleep in Jesus wounds, and bury your sins in your Baptism even as He was buried in Joseph's tomb. Die with Him today, because those who die with Jesus live to love another day, to love Him and to love one another, and not only for another day, but for all eternity. We pray:

Jesus, grant that balm and healing
In Thy holy wounds I find,
Ev'ry hour that I am feeling
Pains of body and of mind.
Should some evil thought within
Tempt my treach'rous heart to sin.,
Show the peril, and from sinning
Keep me ere its first beginning. (TLH 144) Amen.